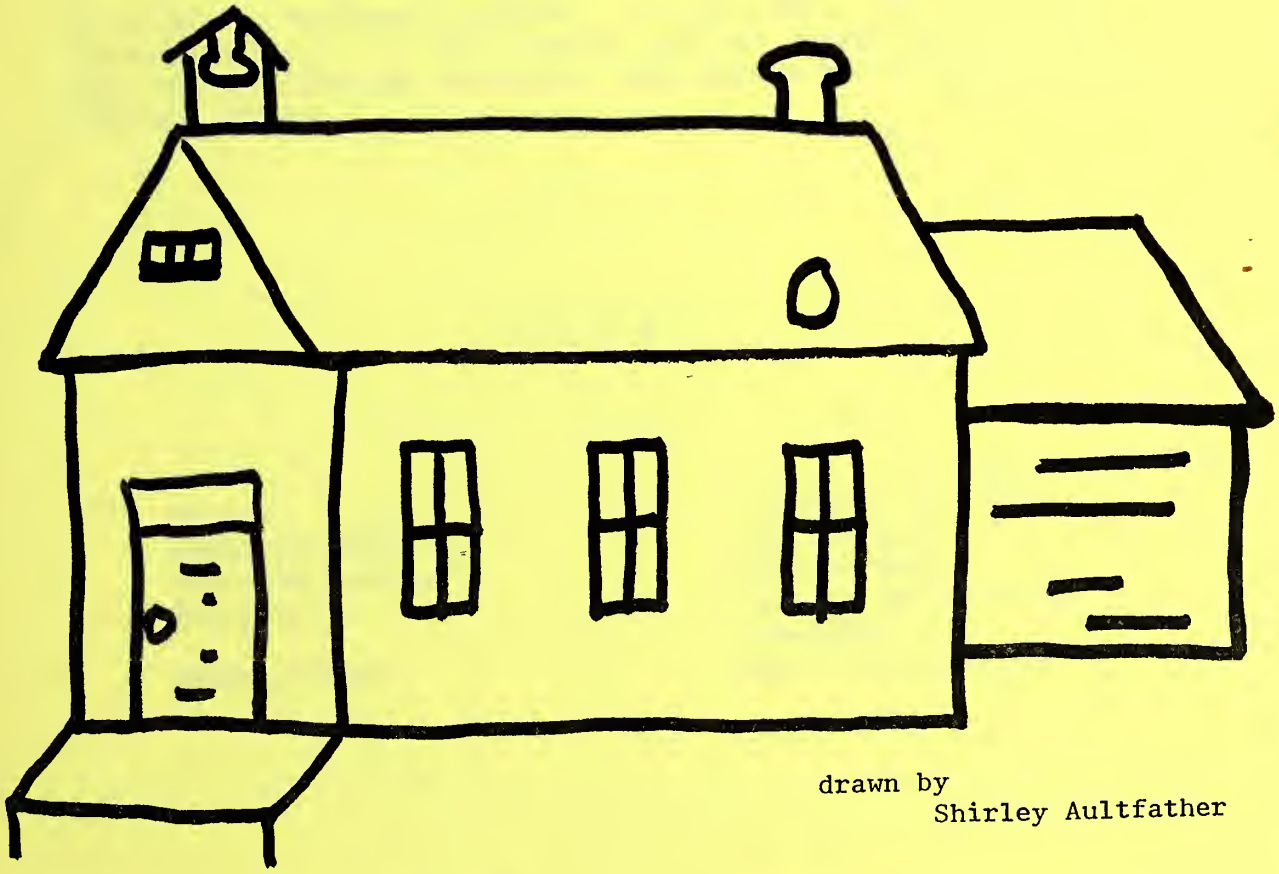
EXCELSIOR NEWS



drawn by
Shirley Aultfather

1859-1949

$2.00
+ 13 tax
$2.13

D E D I C A T I O N

To all of the men, women, boys, and girls who have attended Excelsior School, we dedicate this special issue, published in honor of nearly 100 years.

A C K N O W L E D G M E N T

We wish to thank all of those who have helped to make this issue of our newspaper possible. We especially want to thank the Aultfathers, Mrs. Emer Beadle, and Mr. George Rochford for their information and interest. Also the Mother's Club for their help and advice.

S T A F F

Editor	- Shirley Aultfather
Assistant Editor	- Gary Schaub
Business Manager	- Betty Smith
Reporters	- School Children and Mothers
Staff Advisor	- Mrs. Isabel Morgan

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2015

https://archive.org/details/excelsiornews18500ault

THE FIRST SCHOOL

The first school held in the county was that taught in the summer of 1855 by Miss Maria H. Vaughan, now Mrs. Wilder.

The first schoolhouse built in the county was the one erected at Le Roy in what is now known as District No. 4.

Owing to the fact that the early school superintendents preserved little or no records of their official acts it will be impossible for the historian to give an accurate account of the condition of the public schools of Mower County, until the administration of C. D. Belden, after which time the records are found to be exceptionally complete. This dates from 1881. The following has been compiled from the records of his office and will serve to show the present condition of the school within the county. This report was made to January 1, 1884:

Number of districts in county	119
Number of ungraded schools in the county	114
Number of graded schools	5
Number of rooms in graded schools	20
Number of male teachers in the county	40
Number of female teachers in the county	143
Average wages per month for males	$35.00
Average wages per month for females	26.60
Total number of pupils enrolled in the schools of the county	4,353
Number of teachers' certificates granted in 1883	284
Number of applications for certificates refused	62
Number of first class certificates	6
Number of second class certificates	113
Number of third class certificates	165

Nearly every schoolhouse in the county is a neat frame building, and in good repair, and also provided with suitable maps, charts, and other apparatus. Seven months in the year for school is the general rule in the country districts.

C. D. BELDEN
Supt. of Schools (1884)

SCHOOL HISTORY OF DISTRICT 12

About the year 1859 the first school in district 12 was taught by Reverend Samuel Loomis, in a log house, standing in section 3. Not long after this a school house was built through the united efforts of the people; James Foster generously furnishing poplar logs for the body of the house, and C. H. Huntington burr oak logs for the foundation. The men of the district cut down the trees and raised and roofed the building. A carpenter was then employed to complete the house and make the benches. Having served for nearly twenty years this house was felt to be no longer adapted to the needs of the district. A new one, the present edifice, was then erected on the old site in 1870.

Mariah Gregg finished her summer term in the new school. Al Hickock taught the following winter term. The superintendent visited school once a year.

C. D. Belden was Superintendent of Schools in 1881. He was the first one to keep accurate records.

THE OLD LOG SCHOOL

Joseph and Hannah Epler owned the land where our schoolhouse now stands. They deeded the land to the school about the year 1861.

The schoolhouse was made of logs donated by James Foster and C. H. Huntington. On the north and south sides of the room were shelves about three feet from the floor. A narrow straight shelf was under these shelves where the books, slates, and pencils were kept. Long benches without backs faced them. A row of lower benches were behind these for the little boys and girls. The big boys sat on one side of the room and the girls on the other side. A stove stood in the middle of the room. Logs about two and a half feet in length were used for fuel.

In 1867 Charley Aultfather started to school at the age of five. Theresa Gault, sister of Jim Gault who was a policeman in Austin, was his first teacher. She taught the summer term of four months. John Gutherless taught the following winter term. The teacher boarded with the scholars. Usually a man taught the winter term and a woman taught the summer term.

When the children recited they stood in a straight line in front of the teacher's desk. The Wilson and Monroe Readers, The National Speller, and The Copy Book were used. The teacher had a hickory stick but never had to use it.

Some of the people that attended school with him were the Epler girls, Emer Hotson Beadle, Adkin, Fred, Tom, and Will Hotson, and the children of Barney Johnson.

- CHARLEY AULTFATHER

SCHOOL DAYS

Mrs. Emer Beadle started school at the age of seven and attended the summer term in 1870. It was during that term that the present school was built. The new school was painted white by Mr. Weseman (Don Weseman's grandfather). In those days the children were much like the children of today where paint is concerned. They insisted on putting their fingers on the newly painted boards until Mr. Weseman lost patience with them and in a very stern manner told them he would cut off their fingers if they did it again. They stopped.

The new school was heated by a big stove. The logs were shoved in the end of the stove. The old benches of the log school were discarded and double seats were used. Two big new blackboards were put up. The children were very proud of them.

The children brought their lunch in a pail and all ate their noon meal together as they do now. They also had recess periods.

Some of the children attending at that time were Lena, Charlie, and George Aultfather, Emer, Fred, and Bill Hotson, and Charlie and Clara Gutherless.

- MRS. EMER BEADLE

SCHOOL MEMORIES

Mr. George Rochford's parents came to this country in 1866 from Canada. When his two older brothers and sister started to school they couldn't speak a word of English. They spoke French entirely. At the age of eight years the family moved to the farm now owned by Harold Scott, and George started to school then.

Some of his classmates were Dave, George, Andrew, James, and Laura Aultfather; also Ethel Fraiser Brandon and her brothers Will and Fred Pratt. Mrs. Foster and son William lived where Olson's live now. Rob Beadle lived in a house called old Jake Eppler place located east from the school house and on the east forty of Jim Aultfather's lived old Mr. Eppler. One spring when the ice jammed at the Delbert Clark place, my brother Jimmie and I went into our barn in a row boat and rescued a calf in water up to its neck. At five o'clock the water started receding after the jam had broken and by nine o'clock we could get our horses back into the wet barn by bedding heavily with straw.

Another time when the water rose so high; my brother, John; myself; and a hired man left our barn in a boat, around the hill and over fences and across country down to the Clark place. Every bit of land was under water between the two places.

Fred Pratt, who went to school with me, drowned in the Cedar River north of the city dump. My three brothers and another man found him a little above the Vance Hotson place on the east bank of the river in a little cove.

The neighbor, Mrs. Hotson, got them a sheet and we took the body to the Enterprise Cemetery, dug a grave and buried him that night.

– MARY SCHAUB

MORE MEMORIES

I started to school in 1880 at the age of nearly six. Kate Deming was my first teacher. The Aultfather children very seldom walked to school by the way of the road, but walked through the woods. In those days pupils in rural districts went to school until they were sixteen or eighteen years old. Very few went beyond the eighth grade.

In the new school house there were two rows of double seats placed through the center and along the two outside walls a single row of seats. The teacher's desk resembled a kitchen table. The top of the desk sloped back. This desk was placed on a rostrum. Front seats were used for recitation; pupils stood up as they recited. The stove set on legs and stood about six feet high. The stove itself resembled a drum. They always had programs. Never had any musical instrument so never sang much. Pupils, during the summer term, all went barefooted until they were thirteen or fourteen years old.

In those days teachers wore bustles. James A. Gutherless and Bert Gutherless gathered burdocks and waited their chance to put them on the teacher's (Maggie Sullivan) bustle.

Fred Dufty, Robert Beadle, Eton Officer were on the school board.

Some of the pupils who went to school during his terms of school were:

Bert Gutherless, Ed Gutherless, Charley Gutherless, James Rochford, Stella Byron, George Rochford, Addie Parmenter, Will Aultfather, Laura Aultfather, David Aultfather, Andy Aultfather, and George Aultfather.

- JAMES AULTFATHER

SCHOOL DAYS IN DISTRICT 12

As near as I know I started to school in the spring of 1888. My first teacher was Maggie Sullivan.

It was not very interesting to sit on a high seat where my feet dangled in air instead of reaching the floor and to read that the cat caught the rat and to count 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10. Well the second day I got homesick. I got to thinking about our old dog, Biji, and wanted a romp with him; also the glass of milk and piece of bread or cookie I always found in the old milk house out by the well and so I began to cry. Of course, the teacher asked what the trouble was and I said I wanted to go home. I had a toothache. That brought the desired sympathy so I started home. Mother saw me coming and met me at the door and asked what I wanted. I said I wanted to go to the milk house and get my lunch. She said there was no lunch there as she had sent my lunch to school. I was a school girl now and ate my lunch at school. Old dog, too, was not to be found. My older sister, Laura, was at school and home seemed awful lonesome. Noontime brought my older brothers in the house and how they laughed at me. One of them asked when my tooth stopped aching. I said about three rods past Dufty's (as if I knew what a rod was). But I had heard my folks use the term as road or land measures, and he laughed and said if it had been him he would have turned around and gone back to school to see how much he could have learned in the rest of the day. Well, I never ran away from school again.

It seems to me the early teachers were stronger on discipline than on imparting knowledge, and the children to playing pranks and rude jokes. I remember once our making a small bouquet of flowers with a thistle in it's midst. We all admired it very much and each one smelled it carefully several times and then asked the teacher if she didn't want to see how fragrant it was, then thrust it into her face so as to scratch her nose.

When I was still quite a small girl, Anna Rawn came to teach and she taught us kindness and many games and so many songs. The school board said she did not teach enough of the three R's, but I think we got more from her than from some of the more learned ones. For the first time we liked school and were eager to be there. I still remember some of the songs she taught to us.

SCHOOL DAYS IN DISTRICT 12

(Cont.)

Jay Dufty came to school when very young and sat just in front of me. It was one of my last years there and I was deep in the mysteries of cube root when across my slate hopped the tiniest frog I have ever seen. Of course, I jumped and looked up to see Jay's happy face. Then from his pocket he produced a small handful of tiny frogs and also reached for his treasure on my slate.

Some years ago I met one of my teachers of earlier years and she asked if I really learned anything when she taught as she was so poorly prepared and so homesick she cried herself to sleep every night. Well I must have gotten something for when I started to school in Austin I was with pupils of the same age. The schools and teachers are much better equipped now and at least two District 12 pupils won high honors in A. H. S. being salutatorian of their classes. And so I have many good wishes for District 12 and also many happy memories of my years there. Only a very few of my old schoolmates are here now - some are no longer living and many are scattered to far states. But if they could be asked, I have no doubt they still remember the multiplication tables they learned - the states and their capitols we sang. The campaigns we fought with Washington and to recite Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

- CLARA AULTFATHER

MEMORIES OF 1906

My! How time flies! When I look back it surprises me that forty-three years ago I was a pupil in District 12 for the first time. The building was arranged as it is today with the exception of small steps at the entrance. We carried the water supply from the nearest farm house which happened to be Dufty's at that time.

I went to school with an older brother and sister; and as our folks spoke very little English at home, I had to begin to learn to make myself understood. Naturally many of the pupils laughed at me and enjoyed tormenting me which I, of course, resented. My first teacher was Katherine Kempfert Bump, a woman blessed with an extra measure of patience and kindness and she helped me solve many difficulties. Being small for my age she often held me on her lap.

Other teachers who followed her were Mamie Schow, Faith Canfield, Clara Murans, Gail Fraizer, Lulu Hendryx, and one I shall never forget - George Bolton by name. He was a large man, good natured and fond of sports so he spent lots of time with us playing ball, etc. He taught us to make bows and arrows and when the older boys got rough with them it really was dangerous for the small fry. He began each morning with a prepared talk and in delivering these used his arms in gestures to stress points he wished to impress on us. Being a firm believer in "Cleanliness is Godliness", he often talked on that subject and I remember we pupils often wondered why he wore the same celluloid collar day after day.

Often a hobo slept overnight in the school building and by the time the teacher arrived in the morning he was on his way, leaving perhaps a warm fire to greet her. Gypsies traveled the country then with horses and now and then a band of them would camp overnight by the roadside. Pack peddlers still called on the farmers and I remember one in particular who made it a point to stay overnight at our house. He was of Italian descent and the huge pack he carried contained everything from needles to shawls.

Spelling contests were common. Consequently, we were conscious of our spelling. There were no Mother's Clubs or P.T.A.'s and extra money was usually raised by basket sociables with local talent for the entertainment.

Some of the family names having children in school at that time were Schauls, Brooks, Yarosek, Lien, Howery, Gifford, Feldhus, Fletcher, Lane, Kilgore, Fink, Bulson, and Meyer.

- HENRY MEYER

INTERESTING SIDELIGHTS

Emer Hotson Beadle's father bought the land now owned by George Benson for $1.50 an acre in 1862 from a Mr. Litchfield.

The farm across from the school has always been known as the Dufty place. Mr. Jay Dufty's father, Frederic, came to Mower County in 1879 purchasing 60 acres from Harland W. Page. In the year 1911, he owned 360 acres in sections 3 and 4 in Lyle Township.

George Bolton taught the term 1909 - 1910. He was studying to be a minister and practiced his sermons on the children.

We have been told that one teacher always wore a bag of asafetida to ward off the germs in case of an epidemic.

The road was built before the schoolhouse. It was just a trail.

Lloyd Beadle told us that the big boys would put garter snakes in the teacher's desk because they liked to hear her scream.

Laura Vaughn taught a winter term. Her dress was a striped wool and she wore it for the full term. She was nineteen years old.

THE WINTER OF '73

The winter of '73 was the worst that I can remember. The snow was so deep that there was no train service between Austin and Lyle for six weeks. Carlos Fenton and W. T. Mantorville drove a coach with four horses between the two towns. Their route brought them past the schoolhouse. They would stop with their passengers at the school to get warm. Mr. Mantorville was kind to the children. He would let them ride in the bus when it was empty.

- CHARLEY AULTFATHER

EDUCATION

The earliest teachers in Minnesota were missionaries who worked among the Indians. The first school for white children was opened at the military post at Fort St. Anthony about 1820. It was taught by the officers' wives.

In 1823 John March just graduated from Harvard, came to teach school at Fort Snelling. He taught reading, writing, and figuring to the rule of three, that being considered a liberal education in the wilderness. His pupils ranged in age from four to twenty.

A school for the children of white settlers was not opened until 1847. This school was set up in a former blacksmith shop at St. Paul. Territorial law provided for the organization of school districts. In 1859 when Minnesota became a state there were seventy-two districts. Today there are nearly 8,000 school districts. Education is compulsory for children between the ages of eight and sixteen.

DATE	TEACHER	WAGES PER MONTH
1859	Reverend Samuel Loomis	$ 20.00
1867	Theresa Gault - summer term	20.00
1868	John Gutherless - winter term	20.00
1870	Mariah Gregg	
	Al Hickock	
	Miss Bouregard	
1879	Kate Demming	
	Miss Vaughn	
	Joe Whitford	
	Emmeline Watkins	
1884	Jessie Demming	22.00
	Dora Pratt	
	Eddie Richardson, a cripple	
1894	Carrie Chandler	
1895	Effie Goodman - winter term	
1896	Carrie Chandler - spring term	
	Lulu McCormick - fall term	35.00
	Lizzie C. Smith - winter term	40.00
1897	Maud Canavan - average monthly wage	26.66
1898	Anna M. Wyborney - average monthly wage	26.23
1899	Nellie Enright - average monthly wage	27.33
1900	Nellie Enright	27.06
1901	Martha Hillier	30.00
1902	Martha Hillier	30.00
1903	Mable Allen - Austin	30.00
1904	Margaret Enright - Rose Creek	30.00
1905	Kathryn Kempfert	25, 30.00
1906	Della Pace	
1907	George Jennings	35.00
1908	Carl Holver	40.00
1909	Carl Holver	40.00
1910	George Bolton - fall term	40.00
	Mamie Schow - winter term	38.00
1911	Mamie Schow - summer term	45.00
	Mamie Schow - winter term	45.00
1912	Gail Frazer	40.00
1913	Clara Murane	45.00
1914	Clara Murane	50.00
1915	Faith Canfield	50.00
1916	Lulu Hendryx	45.00
1917	Martha Woodson	50.00
1918	Ethel Olson	65.00
1919	Ruby Glassel	67.50
1920	Ruby Glassel	100.00

DATE	TEACHER	WAGES PER MONTH
1921	Mabel Lightly	$ 100.00
1922	Mabel Lightly	95.00
1923	Verna Fink	90.00
1924	Verna Fink	90.00
1925	Rose Jacobson	95.00
1926	Mrs. Rouze	95.00
1927	Mrs. Rouze	95.00
1928	Neva Dufty	85.00
1929	Neva Dufty	90.00
1930-35	Violet Dufty	85, 85, 75, 65, 65, 70.00
1936-38	Margaret Braford	70, 75, 85.00
1939-40	Eutenna Okland	80, 80.00
1941	Ella Marie Lausen	80.00
1942	Ella Marie Lausen	85.00
1943	Ella Marie Lausen	110.00
1944	Betty Stivers	150.00
1945	Marie Tysseling	150.00
1946	Mrs. Ruth Gullickson	170.00
1947	Mrs. Ruth Gullickson	200.00
1948	Mrs. Isabel Morgan	235.00

OUR SCHOOL TODAY

I started school in the first grade in 1945. The subject I like best is social studies. Right now we are studying about the pioneers, the cowboys, and the Indians. My best sport is baseball and skating.

- GARY SCHAUB

I go to Excelsior School. I am in the third grade. My first teacher was Mrs. Gullickson. There were ten pupils in the school when I started. The subject I like best is reading. I like art also. I like reading because I read so many interesting stories.

- BETTY SMITH

I started school in 1943. Miss Lauson was my teacher. We had eight pupils. When we played ball they always made me be last fielder and I never got up any farther than third baseman. My best subject was reading. The sport I liked was Run Rabbit Run.

The next year was better because I had grown and I was big enough to take care of myself.

The year Mrs. Gullickson taught here, Gary got into a snakes nest and got two snakes up his pants. He came running into the school and said, "Teacher, teacher, I got snakes up my pants". The bigger boys shook Gary up and down until the snakes came out. Ever since that Gary is afraid of snakes.

This year I am in the sixth grade and we have five pupils. Our teacher's name is Mrs. Morgan. My favorite sport is ice skating and playing baseball. My favorite subject is still reading, although, I like arithmetic very much. This year we had fun building a snowhouse, but the night of the Thrasher's party some boys knocked it down. We decided not to build a new one. I hope I have as good a time next year as I have had this year.

- SHIRLEY AULTFATHER